

News Release

Karen Lehman and Trish Johnson will present "The Heartland Food Initiative: Building a Local Food Identity in Minnesota"

By Elizabeth Tollefson on Monday, March 28, 2005

What if all of the local food work in Minnesota could be immediately visible to the people who shop in grocery stores, eat in local restaurants, or even find themselves taking many of their meals in school or hospital cafeterias? They would be amazed—and we believe they would start seeking out the places bringing the most local and sustainably produced foods to their tables.

The Heartland Food Initiative is conceived as a way to make visible all of the work to promote the production and consumption of local and sustainably-produced foods currently underway in Minnesota. We especially want to create more public awareness about the role chefs, retailers, distributors, and processors play in building strong local food systems. We have some ideas for how to do this. But we want to co-create this vision with the diverse participants in the food value chain.

Over the next two years, the Minnesota Project will test and refine an approach to local food promotion that amounts to a “brand” for local food work based on continual improvement. What does that mean? It means that we all start from different places in our commitments to purchase local and sustainably-produced foods. What matters is our interest in and our commitment to doing more.

The Heartland Food Initiative is like a big tent, uniting people who have committed to do more: The farmer who converts to sustainable practices, defined in a variety of ways. The school food program that commits to moving the pop out of the vending machines and replacing it with milk from local suppliers. The chef who commits to sourcing produce, meat, and dairy products from local farmers. Food distributors who label and market their local and sustainably-produced products in ways that make it easy for their customers to pass that value on to consumers.

Karen Lehman directs the Food Program at the Minnesota Project. She has worked on food systems for more than two decades. Beginning with an award-winning documentary on women in farm movements, Dairy Queens, for the PBS series, “Matters of Life and Death,” she expanded her work to encompass policy and practice in local, national, and international arenas. She held the Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems at the University of Minnesota, consulted for the Ford and Communitas Foundations on peasant agricultural development in Mexico and Central America, and developed recommendations for national and global agriculture policy for the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. She is the co-founder and current board member of the Youth Farm and Market Project, an urban youth-based food system program supported by the USDA’s Community Food Projects Grants. Karen was awarded a Bush Leadership Fellowship in 2001 to focus on local food system development. She has a BA in Third World Studies from Macalester College, a Masters in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and has done advanced coursework in public health.

Trish Johnson joined Then Minnesota Project in January 2005 where she is the Food Program Assistant for the Heartland Food Initiative. Prior to this position, she was an Intern at Food Alliance Midwest where she worked organizing the Minnesota Cooks event at the Minnesota State Fair. She has also worked as a Farm Assistant and Outreach Coordinator for Elsie’s CSA Farm in Wisconsin. During the 90’s Trish spent numerous years overseas working as a teacher and volunteering at rural sustainable community organizations. She currently lives in Minneapolis with her husband Paul and their two greyhounds, Bohdi and Jasper.

News Categories

Events

Tweet

Like 0

Share

News Home

News Archives



Small Campus. Big Degree..

- Employment

Events Calendar

Academic Calendar

Library

Directories

Maps, Directions & Parking

Quick Facts

Bookstore

- Faculty & Staff

Email & Calendar

Contact Webmaster

System Website

Home

2900 University Ave., Crookston, MN 56716
800-862-6466 | 218-281-6510 | umcinfo@umn.edu

© 2021 Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved.
The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.
[Privacy Statement](#)